



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

New Bedford Whaling
National Historical Park

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New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park

News Release

For Immediate Release

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***Hidden History* Summer Camp Introduces Local Youth to City's Underground Railroad History**

New Bedford, MA, July 22, 2009—In 1911, on his one hundredth birthday, Joseph M. Smith told a local reporter that he had escaped from North Carolina on a lumber vessel to New Bedford about 1830. After the ship tied up at the wharf at the foot of Union Street, Smith says, “I made a dash for liberty.” He goes on to say “a slave had little to fear in a New Bedford crowd in slavery days...they stood aside and let me pass.” Smith was just one of some 300-700 escaped slaves who made New Bedford their home between 1840 and 1860. In a collaborative endeavor, New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, the New Bedford Historical Society, and the Boys and Girls Club of New Bedford will pilot a one-week summer camp program next week that will introduce 15 local students to the stories of people like Smith, who took enormous risks to gain economic, political, and social opportunities and seek freedom for themselves and/or others.

Hidden History is a program designed to engage young people in the history of New Bedford and the city's role in the Underground Railroad. It works to enhance our children's knowledge of New Bedford's history as well as their passion for learning and critical thinking abilities, using local history and the arts to focus on academic skill areas such as reading, writing, and geography. ***Hidden History*** has been offered by the New Bedford Historical Society as an after-school or Saturday morning program for the past two years. The park is teaming up with the New Bedford Historical Society and the Boys and Girls Club of New Bedford to take the ***Hidden History*** concept and turn it into a one-week summer program. “We're anxious to help grow the great programs that partners like the New Bedford Historical Society have started, so that we can reach an even greater circle of local children and help connect them with the important role their city has played throughout American history,” says park Superintendent Jen Nersesian. The program will take place at the park's Corson Maritime Learning Center during the week of July 27, 2009 and is one of several summer camps being offered by the park this summer.

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park was established by Congress in 1996 to help preserve and interpret America's nineteenth century whaling industry. The park, which encompasses a 13-block National Historic Landmark District, is the only National Park Service area addressing the history of the whaling industry and its influence on the economic, social, and environmental history of the United States.

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